

การมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนในกระบวนการกำหนดนโยบายสาธารณะ: กรณีศึกษา
การมีส่วนร่วมในการออกข้อบัญญัติท้องถิ่นขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นใน
จังหวัดสุพรรณบุรี

People's Participation in Public Policy Process: A Case Study of
Participation in Ordinance Making of Local Administrative
Organizations in Suphanburi, Thailand*

Received: 1 ธันวาคม 2562

Revised: 24 ธันวาคม 2562

Accepted: 27 ธันวาคม 2562

ธนสาร จอพานิช**

Tanasarn Chongpanish**

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาพัฒนาการของการปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นในจังหวัดสุพรรณบุรี โดยมุ่งเน้นในด้านการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนในกระบวนการกำหนดนโยบายขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นโดยเฉพาะการออกข้อบัญญัติท้องถิ่น และศึกษาปัญหาอุปสรรคและแนวทางแก้ไขปัญหาในการ

* This article is a part of the publication of the dissertation topic “People’s Participation in Public Policy Process: A Case Study of Participation in Ordinance Making of Local Administrative Organizations in Suphanburi, Thailand” was for the fulfill of completion of Doctor of Philosophy (Development Administration) (International Program), Graduate School of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration

** นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก หลักสูตรปรัชญาดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาการบริหารการพัฒนา (หลักสูตรนานาชาติ) คณะรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

** Student, Doctor of Philosophy (Development Administration) (International Program), Graduate School of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration, E-mail: golf_x_pac@hotmail.com

เข้าชื่อประชาชนเพื่อเสนอข้อบัญญัติท้องถิ่นต่อสภาขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นในจังหวัดสุพรรณบุรี และองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นอื่นทั่วประเทศ

ผลของการวิจัยพบว่าระดับของการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนในการปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นในจังหวัดสุพรรณบุรีอยู่ในระดับปานกลางถึงระดับต่ำ ถึงแม้ว่าจะมีการโครงการส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมที่จัดโดยองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นแล้วก็ตามแต่กลับได้รับผลตอบรับที่ไม่ค่อยดีนัก กล่าวคือ ประชาชนให้ความสนใจน้อย และคิดว่าเป็นเรื่องไกลตัวและธุระไม่ใช่ ปัญหาอุปสรรคหลักที่พบคือ ปัญหาสถานะเศรษฐกิจและสังคมคือ ระดับการศึกษา ความยากจน และวิถีชีวิตท้องถิ่น ปัญหาอุปสรรคที่รองคือ กฎ ระเบียบและข้อบังคับที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น และวัฒนธรรมการเมืองท้องถิ่นของสุพรรณบุรี นอกจากนี้ยังพบปัญหาว่าตัวแบบการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนของประเทศโลกตะวันตกไม่สามารถนำมาปรับใช้กับสถานการณ์และสภาพชีวิตความเป็นอยู่ของท้องถิ่นในประเทศไทยได้ ข้อเสนอแนะจากการวิจัยนี้คือ การเพิ่มระดับการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนในการออกข้อบัญญัติท้องถิ่นต้องเป็นไปโดยการริเริ่มจากประชาชนในท้องถิ่นนั้นๆ เองโดยได้รับการสนับสนุนอย่างเต็มที่จากรัฐบาล ซึ่งรัฐบาลจะต้องออกมาตรการหรือนโยบายที่ส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนมีคุณภาพชีวิตที่ดีขึ้นอันเป็นปัญหาอุปสรรคหลักที่ขัดขวางการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชน และในขณะเดียวกันนี้ตัวประชาชนเองต้องรับรู้ถึงสิทธิและหน้าที่ของพลเมืองที่พึงมีและปฏิบัติที่จะต้องรู้รับผิดชอบ รักษา และพัฒนาท้องถิ่นของตนเองโดยไม่ต้องพึ่งพิงความช่วยเหลือจากรัฐบาลเพียงอย่างเดียวเท่านั้น

คำสำคัญ: การมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชน ข้อบัญญัติท้องถิ่น การประชาคมรับฟังความคิดเห็น สถานะเศรษฐกิจและสังคม วัฒนธรรมการเมือง องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น

Abstract

This study aimed: 1) to study the development of local administration in Suphanburi, Thailand, emphasizing people's participation in policy-making process, i.e. local ordinance; 2) to study and identify the obstacles regarding local ordinances by people's initiatives in the local administration organizations in Suphanburi; and 3) to provide solutions and policy recommendations for people's participation in the local administration in the case of local ordinances by people's initiative in Suphanburi and the entire country of Thailand.

The results of this research provide solutions regarding the problems surrounding people's participation local administrations, policy recommendations, and recommendations for future research. The three main research questions were asked in order to ascertain the obstacles to the people's participation in local ordinance creation in Suphanburi. The research results revealed that the total of participation rate in Suphanburi was at a medium to low level. Although the local administrative organizations encourage the people to participate in public hearings, the results turned out to be not attractive. The main obstacle concerned the socio-economic problems, i.e. level of education, poverty, and local ways of life. The second obstacle involved the laws, rules, and regulations related to the local administrations. The third obstacle was the local political culture of Suphanburi. Therefore, the results confirmed the hypotheses that the three obstacles were the main problems concerning the people's participation in the creation of the local ordinances in Suphanburi. Additionally, the model of people's participation in the creation of the local ordinances introduced by the western countries could not be applied to the locals in Suphanburi. The bureaucrats that are working closely with the people are not proactive enough to encourage the participation rate. At the same time, the local people were bored, inactive, and did not see the importance of participation in their local ordinance creation process. This research recommended that the increase of people's participation in local ordinance creation must be carried out by the people themselves with the full of support from the government. Moreover, the government should launch policy to lift up the people's quality of life, education, and opportunity for making a living, and meanwhile the local people should acknowledge their rights and duties of citizenship; they should be responsible for their local hometown and not just wait for government support.

Keywords: People's participation, Local ordinance, Public hearing, Socio-economic, Political culture, Local Administrative Organizations

Introduction: Background to the Study and Problem Statement

The main purpose of the constitution of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997) was to encourage people's participation at every level of politics, i.e. the national and local level. Under this constitution, the direct democracy principle was introduced in order to fulfill the shortcomings that usually occurred during the time of a representative democratic constitution¹ In addition, it was to promote the involvement of the people of Thailand in governing the country, checking the use of power of the government, as well as to protecting and preserving the rights and freedom of Thai citizens, for instance, the rights of initiatives by the people which was first introduced in this constitution.

The local administrative organization is the key unit that the objective of encouraging people at the grass-roots level to participate in politics and to have a political voice. The role of this organization would also be the immediate response to the needs of the local people in the community. It could also relieve the tasks of the central government which could not respond to micro-level problems in small communities. In addition, the basis of democracy can be found in the local government, where the people in the community would be aware of and acknowledge the social phenomena in their community. Although the local governments in Thailand are under the supervision of the central government, they tend to have independent and sufficient authority to provide public services to the people in the community.

The Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542 opened an opportunity for the local people to initiate their own local ordinances.² The purpose of this act was to promote self-governing, people's participation, and the right to protect the environment of local communities and properties. Local ordinances are basic laws made by the people in a particular community to protect and preserve the environment or any kind of good tradition and culture of the community. However, there seems to be sufficient guidance for the local

¹ Preface of Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540

² Note about the reason of enactment, Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542

government to operate the administration to encourage the people in the community to participate in community actions. The constitutions and the acts that allow the people to have the right to participate and access information of the local government might be perfect “on the shelf” to be a guidebook, but in reality the people have less opportunity to access information and involvement in the decision-making and policy processes.

The interesting point about Suphanburi is the local politics, where the 21st prime minister of Thailand was the representative of this province—Mr. Banhaan Silapa-archa from the Chartthai party. This party has dominated this province for more than 4 decades and it is also known as Suphanburi’s political party at the national level. Additionally, the local politics is strong considering the number of people participating in elections. In addition, the executives in the local administrative organizations in this province are always the same group of people that have a relationship with the Chartthai party. In addition, the executives of local administrative organizations in this province are always being the same group of people that have the relationship to Chartthai party. Though the situation of national politics is facing instability problems, the local politics in Suphanburi seem not to be affected by external problems. Because of the uniqueness of Suphanburi’s local politics, the researcher focused on this province by looking at the people’s participation in local politics, especially in terms of local ordinances by the people’s initiative. In addition, the attractive point of this province is the percentage of the population of voters in both national and local elections during this decade. The rate of voter turnout in Suphanburi is quite a bit higher than the country average in terms of the general election of the country. The voter turnout in the general election in 2007 and 2011 was 74.49 and 75.03 percent consecutively, whereas voter turnout rate in Suphanburi was 76.3 and 75.5 percent consecutively. Even the voter turnout for local administration organizations was high, with the rate of 79.5 and 80.3 percent in 2009 and 2014 consecutively.³ Nevertheless, the researcher collected the data of local ordinances enacted during 5 years period and found

³ Office of Election Commission Thailand, Statistic of Local Administrative Election from 2009-2014, https://www.ect.go.th/ewt/ewt/ect_th/more_news.php?cid=13 (last visited 10 December 2019)

that there is none of the local ordinance initiated by the people in the area, but only by the endorsement of the executives and the order of the central government.

Therefore, the physical condition and administration could be problems for a local province like Suphanburi, but why is there no evidence that shows any of the people's participation in local ordinance initiatives by the people? What is the development of the local administration in Suphanburi like? The local administration might have an effect on the behavior of the people of Suphanburi. Although the size of the voter turnout there is much higher than the country's average, there might be a hidden problem under those numbers. In addition, the law opens an opportunity for the people to initiate their own laws, but in Suphanburi, there have been no ordinances created by the people.

Research methods:

In this research, the researcher employed the field survey study which includes following three types of methods.

1) Documentary research: academic documents related to the research topic, such as textbooks, laws, rules, legislations, articles, conference papers, journals, and data from the Internet as well as research papers and other related documents.

2) Observation: observing the general status, geography, socio-economic condition, and culture of Suphanburi administration was employed for analyzing the data. Participant observation was used in this research by participating in the local administration council meetings for ordinance enactment, which would help the researcher understand the local politics and administrations of the local administration in Suphanburi.

3) Interviews: in-depth interviews were used using the semi-structured questioning technique so as not to force the informants and in order to obtain accurate data. The technique for obtaining the data solely depended on the researcher's capability to "dig" up the data. The key informants were informed by the researcher in advance about the objectives of the research. The publishing of names and titles of key informants in the research must be permitted. The key informants were all from Suphanburi. The groups of

key informants were divided into four different groups of people involved in these organizations' activities which are as follows;

Group 1: The government officers that are responsible for supervising local administrative organizations i.e. Provincial Governor, Director of Provincial Office for Local Administration, District Chief, Chief of District Office for Local Administration

Group 2: The executives in the local administrative organizations i.e. Chief Executives of Provincial Administration Organization, Mayors, Chief Executives of sub-district administrative organizations, Chief Administrator of sub-district administrative organization, Municipal Clerk

Group 3: The local people i.e. residents, community leaders, village headmen

Group 4: Academicians i.e. university professors, lawyers

The size of the sampling was approximately 10 representatives each. This is due to the administration of Suphanburi province having 10 districts and 127 local administrative organizations.

Research Results:

1. The Characteristic of People's Participation in Policy Process and Local Ordinances in Suphanburi

The researcher employed field survey research in the Suphanburi area in 10 different districts and found that the physical conditions of the location could be divided into 2 types: urban and rural areas. This is because the characteristics of the participation and ways of living of the local people are different between the two groups of people. After the survey with the local administrative organizations in the urban and rural areas, this research found that the overall participation rates in any activities organized by the local administrative organizations in Suphanburi were a medium to low level. In addition, there was a difference between rural and urban areas in terms of the characteristics and level of the people's participation in local policy and ordinance creation. In Group 1, the people in the city tend to participate less than in the countryside. This is due to the city residents

having various occupations, especially those with regular monthly salaries, such as government officers or employees in stores and businesses, as well as traders in the market, etc. Due to the variety of local people's occupations and time constraints, as discussed earlier, it is very difficult to assemble the people to meet the required number of signatures when the local administrative organizations request cooperation from the people to participate in various activities or public hearings organized by agencies. This is because the time of the meetings often does not match the time when the people have to go to work during the day time. In addition, the downtown of Suphanburi has adequate infrastructure provided by the government and town municipality, i.e. roads, electricity, water, etc., and therefore it is considered that the support from the local administrative organization is not necessary since the people think that they can take care of themselves.⁴ On the other hand, Group 2, the people in the rural areas, are different from those in the urban areas; most of them are still farmers earning lower incomes and they do not have a regular salary like the people in the city, which is the main factor affecting the difference in the characteristics of the people's participation in the local policymaking process. In the rural areas, people tend to participate more because they think that the local administrative organization must respond to their requests. They also think that the executives and the members of the council have been voted into office by them and therefore they must respond immediately. The general requests from the people in the rural areas concern infrastructure, i.e. roads, electricity, and water. However, a commandeering method is necessary in some areas in order to meet the number of participants required by law, but it is a minority.⁵

1.1 Activities Promoting the People's Participation

The people's participation promotion activities organized by the local administrative organizations can be separated into 2 types: 1) cultural activities, i.e. Loy Kratong, Songkran, and Buddhist Holy day; and 2) government campaign activities, i.e. public

⁴ Ekapan Injai-eau, the summary of the interview of Mayor of Suphanburi Town Municipality, interviewed on 18 August 2017

⁵ The summary of focus group of Executives of Local Administrative Organizations, interviewed on 1 November 2017

hearing, seminars, job training, Suphanburi's good young people project, and the drugs free village project. People are interested in participating in cultural activities more than government campaign activities. This is because the people think that the government campaign activities are not important to their lives, which forces the local administrative organizations to use commandeering practices or giving small gifts to attract more people to participate in those activities.

1.2 The Process of the Enactment of Local Ordinances^{6 7 8}

The process of the enactment of local ordinances can be divided into 3 patterns following the category of local administrative organizations, which are the provincial administrative organization, the municipality, and the sub-district administrative organization. Generally, the steps of process of the enactment of local ordinances comprise of 1) The draft of local ordinance must be considered and approved by the council, 2) the governor or district chief officer approved the proposed local ordinance, and 3) the approved draft of local ordinance by the governor or district chief officer must be returned to the Chief Executive of Provincial Administrative Organization or Mayor or Chief Executive of Sub-district Administrative Organization to sign and enact. The local administrative organization processes of the enactment of local ordinances are similar in terms of the number of days for council considerations and the supervisor's consideration. There is one small difference— the ordinance approval person of each type of local administrative organization is different. The provincial administrative organization and municipality ordinance approval person is the provincial governor, while that for the sub-district administrative organization is the chief of the district.

⁶ The Act of Provincial Administrative Organization B.E. 2540, 3rd amendments B.E. 2546, section 53.

⁷ The Act of Municipality B.E. 2496 13th amendments B.E. 2552, section 60 and 62.

⁸ The Act of Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organization B.E. 2537 5th amendment, section 71.

1.3 The Arrangement of Public Hearings in the Development Plan Creation of the Local Administrative Organizations in Suphanburi

The public hearings for people's comments on any projects initiated by the local administrative organizations are the best channel that is open for the people's participation in terms of both local management and local operation checking. The regulations of the Ministry of Interior require that any of the projects or development plans initiated by the local administrative organizations be approved by the public hearing events.⁹ In the case of Suphanburi, all of the public hearings are organized using the annual budget plan of the local administrative organizations under government regulation enforcement, such as public hearings for community development plans, public hearings for waste management, and public hearings for businesses that are harmful to the public health. There is a difference between the characteristics of the participation in public hearings of the people in the urban and rural areas of Suphanburi. The participation rate is moderately high in the rural areas, while it is low in the urban areas. The reason is that the occupations of the people in the rural areas are not varied—most of them are farmers in rice fields, sugar cane fields, and rubber plantations. Half of the participants were senior citizens that stayed at home, which is easy for assembling them. However, the large numbers of participants in public hearings were essentially from the local administrative organizations, including other agendas in the events in order to attract the participants, such as elderly premium distributions, free meals, free blanket projects in winter, and so forth.¹⁰

⁹ Regulation of Ministry of Interior on the making of local development plan B.E. 2562, Section 6 (2)

¹⁰Summary of Interview of Executives of Local Administrative Organizations in Suphanburi, interviewed on September 2017

2. Problems and Causes of the Problems that are Obstacles to the People's Participation in Local Ordinance Initiatives

2.1 Problems Regarding the Laws, Rules, and Regulations Related to Local Administrative Organizations

1) The Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542¹¹

In this case, the problems related to the details of this Act can be described according to two.

(1) Problems concerning the processes and conditions of local ordinances by the people's initiatives

In the processes and conditions of local ordinances by the people's initiatives in accordance with the Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542, the study revealed two obstacles: 1) problems regarding the number of eligible voters to enlist for a request for a local ordinance; and 2) problems with the proposal process for a local ordinance by the people's initiative. The study found that the required number of eligible voters' signatures gathering for proposing the draft of local ordinance by people's initiative is an obstacle. In practical terms, the enlistment for proposing a local ordinance is very difficult in the Suphanburi areas because the conditions require more than 50% of the registered residents of the local administrative organization. As it is well known that the registered residents do not always reside in the area. There might be some people that have to work in the downtown area or are students in a different province. In the case of one local administrative organization as indicated earlier, therefore the proposal of an ordinance must be attached with more than 5,000 signatures. This is impossible in reality. One of the problems with the proposing process of the local ordinance by the people's initiative is that the act requires that a list of the enlisting people must be attached with the draft of the local ordinance, a list of the signatures, and the reference documents for the people's identification. In greater detail, the people that want to sign up for enlisting

¹¹Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542, Section 4-6.

must attach a copy of their identification card with their signature. Additionally, the proposed draft of the local ordinance to the council must have clear requirements and it must be under the authority of that local administrative organization. Further, the name list of the representatives of the people enlisting that have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the people in the local ordinance consideration process must be attached.

(2) Problems concerning the stakeholders in local ordinances by the people's initiatives

According to the interviews with the stakeholders, i.e. local executives, government officers, and community leaders, they had coherent points of view on the knowledge about the law. Indeed, some local executives and community leaders were seen to not be knowledgeable of this act. Furthermore, the people in Suphanburi thought that the ordinance creation, development planning, and public management were the responsibility of only the local administrative organizations and the executives—they only knew that if they lost benefits from the ordinance, they had the right to veto, yet they did not know about their rights concerning the creation of ordinances. Lastly, some of the local executives thought that this act might be a political tool of opponents to discredit the management of the executives.

2) Problems with the Rules and Regulations Regarding Local Administrative Organizations

The researcher found that the rules and regulations enforced by the government on the local administrative organizations had the main objective of promoting the people's participation in local administration, such as the requirement of public hearings in local development plan creation and public hearings for annual budget plan making. Some of the local executives admitted that the outdated rules and regulations of the local administration affected the local policy implementation, especially in terms of the people's participation promotion activities, such as regulations concerning the budget allocations of the local administrative organizations.

In summary, the details of the Act of Local Ordinance by the People's Initiative B.E.2542 might not be the main obstacle to the implementation of this act. In the

case of Suphanburi, the act is not suitable for the local administration conditions because it is not in a business district or industrial estate, which requires specific laws to manage the orderliness of the province; on the contrary, it is in an agricultural area with abundant rice and sugar cane fields. In addition, local political conflicts are rarely found in the areas, either. Therefore, the local problems are not so complicated in terms of finding solutions. The act might be a good channel for promoting direct democracy, but it is not suitable for Suphanburi's conditions. There are only two conditions for implementing this act, which are: 1) if it had a strong impact on Suphanburi's way of life, or 2) if the act is used as a political tool by opponents to discredit the local executives.

3. Local Political Culture Problems

There are 3 problems in the local political culture of Suphanburi: 1) the influence of local politicians, and 2) the foster system and kinship and connections of the local politicians and, 3) buying votes.

1) Influence of local politicians

Almost 90% of the local executives have been successful in their business, which is the main income of the local people, i.e. rice mills. The elected local executives in Suphanburi also mostly inherit there from generation to generation, so the local politicians are from the same group of people or have a kinship relationship with the local executives. The participation could only be seen during the general election both national and local level. However, the influence of the local politicians is partly an obstacle to the people's participation in the local policymaking process. Why it is only partly an obstacle? Because, in the case of Suphanburi, there is only one "thought leader," who is Mr. Banharn Silpa-Archar. He is a truly influential person of Suphanburi, both in terms of political thought and the decision-making of the people. The local political culture of Suphanburi is what Mr. Banharn has done for all of his life to be an example for all local executives. Moreover, the local people will always vote for a person that is working like him, forcing the local

executives to follow his political path. Finally, online social networking also helps to prevent the people from the influence of the local politicians.

2) Patronage system and kinship and the connections of the local politicians

The local administrative organizations in Suphanburi have adopted a foster system through the kinship of local council members and local executives. This is rooted in Suphanburi society. We can observe this in many ceremonies in the areas, such as funerals, weddings, and ordination ceremonies, in which the local executives and community leaders often participate even though the host is not their relatives. One of the obstacles to the people's participation is that the local executives give priority to their partisans, which leads to the boredom of the people regarding the local politics. There is an interdependent relationship between the local executives and community leaders in the rural areas of Suphanburi. The community leaders usually answer questions by giving credit to the local executives.¹²

The Patronage systems is used when someone does not want to sacrifice or lose his or her benefits. It can also be a give and take between the authorities and benefit losers. In Suphanburi's local administrations, the foster system is unavoidable. There are benefit exchanges via the foster system between local politicians and the provincial government officers, and this leads to obstacles in the development of local administrations in Suphanburi because the foster system supports low quality local politicians.

3) Buying votes

The problem of buying votes is an obstacle to the development of democracy both at the national and local level. Although Suphanburi has only one dominating political party, which is the Charthaipattana party led by Mr. Banharn Silpa-archa, the influencer on the people's decision-making, local politics has revealed that the buying vote problem still exists. The high competition in local politics of Suphanburi province causes buying vote problems. However, in Suphanburi, the buying vote problem

¹²Summary of Interview of Community Leaders in Suphanburi, interviewed on September 2017

does not occur at the national election level, as for example with elections of the members of the parliament, because the Chartthaipattana party has a secure bastion which helps the party always win the election.

On the other hand, the buying vote problem tends to occur in local elections because of the high competition of local leaders. The local government officers have admitted that there votes are bought, especially in the rural areas of Suphanburi. The cause of the buying vote problem is the socio-economic conditions of Suphanburi, where most of the people are suffering in poverty. Buying votes is an easier way for the people to earn something from their political participation activities than participating in local policy and ordinance creation.

4. Socio-economic Problems

1) Level of education

In the case of Suphanburi, there is a difference in terms of the level of education between two groups of people, those in the urban and those in the rural areas. The people in the urban areas of Suphanburi seem to be well educated in terms of understanding their basic rights and duties, but the factor affecting the level of the people's participation tends to be the consciousness of citizenship, as the people seem to be quite selfish—if they see that something has a direct impact on them from an ordinance for example, they will participate in its creation to a greater extent. On the other hand, the people in the rural areas have a lower level of education than those in the urban areas, so their knowledge of their rights and duties as citizens is also less. They do not recognize their rights, such as what their basic rights and duties as a citizen are. How can they exercise their rights in accordance with the law? However, a high level of participation can be found in the rural areas of Suphanburi where the people are working in the agricultural sector. This is due to the local executives' vision and capability in managing the increase in the people's participation rate.

Therefore, the level of education might not be the main obstacle to the people's participation in the local policy and ordinance making process because good

public relations and thorough information accessibility can provide the people with better knowledge about their rights and duties as citizens.

2) Poverty

Poverty is the main obstacle to the people's participation in the local policy and ordinance creation process. The majority of the population of Suphanburi work in the agricultural sector, and this results in their income per head per year being low, and it also means that they have fewer job opportunities for better living conditions. As they are working in the agricultural sector, their incomes depend on the price of the agricultural products, as indicated earlier, and these agricultural products are rice, sugar cane, and raw rubber, which are struggling with a low price crisis that makes the people rely solely on government price subsidization.

Furthermore, and as indicated earlier again, the poverty problem draws the people's attention away from seeing the importance of participation in local politics; they feel that they need to spend all of their time working to make a living. The main reason why people are not interested in being involved in the public hearing process is that they have to be absent from their work and they will lose their income from the employers, who own the plantations and the fields. They think that the participation in the public hearings is not as important as their work making their living. They also think that even if they participated in public hearings on local development budget plans, it would not make a big change to their life because overall the local budget, including government subsidization, is too small for the development of their hometown.

Conclusion:

According to the research results, the laws are not the main obstacles to the promotion of the people's participation in ordinance creation. The details of the act or related regulations are not the problems, but the people themselves are the problem, especially the local executives that they do not recognize the laws that are promoting direct democracy. The local people also lack of accessibility information and education

about the laws. The main problems are the local political culture and socio-economic problems, where poverty significantly affects the people's participation in ordinance creation. Since the majority of the population in Suphanburi are in the agricultural sector, they tend to be lower income and suffer from agricultural product price crises. The people's participation requires a great deal of sacrifice of time; however, the lower income people tend not to participate because they have to be absent from their work, which will make them lose their daily income. Therefore, it is not the intention of the constitutions or the act to encourage the local people's participation.

In the case of Suphanburi, the recommendations are the solution to the problem of poverty and educating the local people to understand the importance of the rights and duties of citizens. Additionally, the right to participate in local administrations as the "owner" of their homeland, which is not the current situation, must always be a relationship between the central government and local executives.

Policy Recommendations:

Government Policy Recommendations

1) Recommendations on Laws, rules, and regulations related to Local Administrations

The Act of Local Ordinance by the People's Initiative B.E. 2542 should be amended in the process of ordinance initiatives and the number of eligible voters to enlist for local ordinance initiatives. The number of eligible voters should decrease to 20 or 30% of all of the number of voters. In addition, the process of ordinance initiatives, for example, the submission of the complete draft of the proposed ordinance, submission of the pledge of eligible voters, and the announcement of the name listed in the ordinance initiative were complicated. These processes must be rethought and redesigned in order to be shorter and easier for the ordinary people to understand and not to be an obstacle for the people to participate in the proposing of an ordinance to the local council. Furthermore, a recommendation is the establishment of a special agency for assisting the local people in

drafting ordinances and guidance for them to propose them to the local administrative organization councils. Lastly, the government should issue regulations that force both the people and the local administrative organizations to be more knowledgeable of the advantages of the participation principle.

2) Recommendations on Socio-economic policy

The Thai government should consider its short-term and long-term policy on the solutions to the problems surrounding poverty. In terms of short-term policy, the government should launch agricultural product price subsidizing policies, especially for rice, sugar cane, and rubber. In addition, low interest rate loans from the government for the farmers to invest in the next harvesting seasons must be included. In terms of long-term policy, the government should promote innovations in the agricultural sector in order to increase product value, such as high-quality rice for a higher selling price, advanced technology for producing raw rubber, or organic agricultural products as alternatives for farmers' extra income. When the quality of life and economic status are better, the agricultural sector will attract the new generations to get involved in the market and they will not tend to leave their hometown for a better income, jobs, and life in the downtown areas such as Bangkok, which is very crowded and cannot expand anymore.

3) Recommendations on Education Policy

The government should promote the understanding of the citizens' rights and freedom to express their opinions and initiatives in local administrations through national education policy. This is a long-term policy that could be embedded in the consciousness of the citizens regarding their notions of citizenship and the rights of the new generations. The government should adjust the national basic education curriculum for promoting democracy and local administrations in order to encourage understanding and knowledge about the importance of democracy and local administrations—from elementary school to higher education.

4) Recommendations on Local Administrations Policy

The decentralization to the local administration should be reformed. The central government should truly decentralize authority to the local administrations and

allow them more freedom in local policymaking and policy decision-making, while the central government's supervision should be retained in order to keep the orderliness and legitimacy of local administrative organizations.

Local Administrative Organizations Policy Recommendations

1) Recommendations on Local Leadership

the executives of the local administrative organizations should be more proactive and work closely with the local community. For example, the executive committee should arrange meetings in community venues and not just stay in the council. The knowledge sharing of successful management in increasing the participation rate from successful local administrative organizations to other local administrative organizations should be promoted.

2) Recommendations on local people's networking initiation

The local administrative organizations should initiate people's networking in every community via advanced online social networking, which is faster and more accurate in distributing the information of the local administrative organizations to all local people. This could initiate two-way communications between the organizations and the local people, which would encourage more participation in every policymaking process.

3) Recommendations on the development of public relations

The local administrative organizations should provide and improve their public relations regarding the knowledge of the people's participation in local administrations and knowledge of the importance of the local administrations for the local people. Public relations should consider the efficiency and capabilities of the dissemination of information to all of the people in the areas using a variety of media channels, i.e. print media, community radio, local cable television, the Internet, and online social network. This dissemination of information should include good management, supporting budgets, and evaluation of the results for future improvement.

4) Recommendations on changes in the public hearing procedure

Public hearings are the best channel for allowing the local people to participate in direct democracy in the local administrations. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior requires that all of the local administrative organization arrange public hearings on every local policy planning process. The researcher also supports this policy of arranging public hearings. However, in the case of the local administrative organizations in Suphanburi, the problems of time constraints between the time of the public hearing events and the free time of the local people do not match so that the local people cannot participate in meetings; and the number of participants do not meet the required amount demanded by the regulations of the Ministry of Interior. This is because most of the local people have to work during the time when the meetings are held. Therefore, the local administrative organizations should change the time of the public hearing events to evening sessions or on weekends so that the local people can participate more when they return to their homes after work. In addition, the local administrative organizations should not arrange public hearings at the same time but should distribute the size of the events to every small community. For the larger local administrative organizations, there should be surveys or questionnaires sent to every house in the area instead of requiring all local people to participate at one time in the public hearing. This is to avoid the insufficient number of participants in the public hearing events. Lastly, the local administrative organizations should inform the people about the importance of public hearings and not include extra agendas, such as elderly premium distributions. In this way, the outcomes of the public hearing could be achieved without distraction by other agendas.

Bibliography

Laws

Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540

The Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550

The Act of Local Ordinance Initiative B.E. 2542

The Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560

Regulation of Ministry of Interior on the making of local development plan B.E. 2562, Section 6 (2)

The Act of Provincial Administrative Organization B.E. 2540, 3rd amendments B.E. 2546

The Act of Municipality B.E. 2496 13th amendments B.E. 2552

The Act of Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organization B.E. 2537 5th amendment

Interviews of the key informants

Interviews of the provincial executives, interviewed on August 2017

Interviews of the executives of local administrative organizations, interviewed on November 2017

Interviews of the chiefs of local administrations office, interviewed on September 2017

Interviews of the law expertise, interviewed on December 2017

Focus groups

Focus groups of the executives of local administrative organizations, interviewed on November 2017

Focus groups of The Community leaders, interviewed on November 2017